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SUBJECT: EU GAERC: CZECH COMMENTS IN ADVANCE OF THE MARCH
10 MEETING

REF: STATE 22352

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Emboff met with Anna Sykova, Deputy Director of the Czech MFA Department of Common Foreign and Security Policy prior to the March 10-11 EU General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC). Of note were her comments on Kosovo, Afghanistan, Syria and Zimbabwe. While Sykova anticipates that Iran will be a key topic of discussion, she does not expect any EU statement since no work is being done currently to prepare GAERC conclusions on Iran.

Western Balkans

2, (SBU) Sykova anticipates that, like last month, the EU Foreign Ministers are likely to spend much of their time discussing Kosovo. Given that the Czech Republic is a member of the International Steering Group, we inquired about the timing of the GOCR's formal recognition of Kosovo. Sykova referenced Prime Minister Topolanek's current travel schedule (March 8-11 he will be in Jordan and Israel) and the upcoming cabinet meeting on March 17 as the earliest and most likely date for the GOCR to initiate formal action, which is in keeping with PM Topolanek's comments to President Bush in late February.

Afghanistan

¶3. (SBU) On Afghanistan, Synkova noted that there would be GAERC conclusions on this topic which would express support for the review by the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, which met the week of February 1 in Tokyo, on the implementation of the Afghan Compact. The EU will also highlight the EU Police Mission, which will be operational by the end of March and express readiness to consider further enhancement of its broader engagement in Afghanistan. Synkova also noted that March is an important month for the Czechs because they will formally celebrate the establishment of the newest PRT in Logar, Afghanistan. (Note: The Czechs plan to formally take over command and control of PRT Logar on March 20. End Note.)

Lebanon - Engagement with Syria

¶4. (SBU) Synkova thanked Emboff for our points on Lebanon and Syria. She referenced the GOCR support for the varied EU statements on the situation in both nations. On the topic of visits by Western diplomats to Damascus, Synkova acknowledged the visit last month to Syria by Czech opposition leader Paroubek. While unfortunate, in her words, and not in line

with the position of the GOCR, she pointed out that Paroubek traveled in his party capacity and he did not speak on behalf of the government.

Zimbabwe

15. (SBU) According to the Czechs, the EU shares our concern that there need to be election monitors in Zimbabwe. In its GAERC conclusions, the EU will highlight its humanitarian and economic concerns in Zimbabwe and note the EU role as the most significant donor to the country. It will bluntly note that the EU has not been invited to send a formal observer mission to oversee these elections and it will state that the EU's targeted sanctions are specifically aimed against the regime leaders responsible for Zimbabwe's current crisis and not the general public.

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